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Poems ~~verses~~  
by Stephen Phillips



Edmund Andrews



# **POEMS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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PAOLO AND FRANCESCA : A Tragedy  
TWENTY-FIRST THOUSAND

HEROD : A Tragedy  
TWENTY-FIRST THOUSAND

In the "Flowers of Parnassus" Series  
Cloth and Leather. Sq. 16mo

MARPESSA. Illustrated by Philip Connard  
FIFTEENTH THOUSAND

CHRIST IN HADES. Illustrated by  
Henry Ospovat

# POEMS

BY

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

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### NOTE

THE poem, "Christ in Hades," with the accompanying lyrics, which originally appeared in Mr. Elkin Mathews' Shilling Garland, is included in the present volume. No further copies of the poem in its original form will be printed.



To MAY



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## THE WOMAN WITH THE DEAD SOUL

ALLURED by the disastrous tavern-light  
Unhappy things flew in out of the night;  
And ever the sad human swarm returned,  
Some crazy-fluttering, and some half-burned.  
Among the labourers, gnarled, and splashed  
with mire,  
The disillusioned women sipping fire,  
Slow tasting bargainers amid the flare,  
And lurid ruminators,— I was 'ware  
Of that cold face from which I may not run,  
Which even now doth stab me in the sun.  
That face was of a woman that alone  
Sat sewing; a white liquor by her shone;

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From which at moments warily and slow  
She sipped; then bent above her sewing low.  
A sober dress of decent serge she wore  
Uplifted nicely from the smirching floor;  
And with a bunch of grapes her hat was  
crowned,

Which trembled together if she glanced around.  
Speckless, arranged; and with no braid awry,  
All smoothed and combed she sewed incessantly.

She turned her eyes on me; they had no ray;  
But stared like windows in the peer of day.  
So cold her gaze that I bowed down my head  
Trembling; it seemed to me that she was  
dead;

And that those hands mechanically went,  
As though the original force not yet was spent.

You that have wailed above the quiet clay,  
That on the pillow without stirring lay;  
Yet think how I stood mourning by the side  
Of her who sat, but seemed as she had died;  
Cold, yet so busy; though so nimble, dead;  
Whose fingers ever at the sewing sped.

I spoke with her, and in slow terror guessed  
How she, so ready for perpetual rest,  
So smoothly combed and for the ground pre-  
pared,

Whose eyes already fixed beyond me stared,  
Could sidle unobserved and safely glide  
Amid the crowd that wist not she had died.  
Gently she spoke; not once her cheek grew  
pale

And I translate the dreadful placid tale.  
She with a soul was born: she felt it leap

Within her: it could wonder, laugh, and weep.  
But dismally as rain on ocean blear,  
The days upon that human spirit dear  
Fell; and existence lean, in sky dead-grey,  
Withholding steadily, starved it away:  
London ignored it with deliberate stare,  
Until the delicate thing began to wear.  
She felt it ailing for she knew not what;  
Feebly she wept; but she could aid it not.  
Ah, not the stirring child within the womb  
Hath such an urgent need of light and room!  
Then hungry grew her soul: she looked around,  
But nothing to allay that famine found;  
She felt it die a little every day,  
Flutter less wildly, and more feebly pray.  
Stiller it grew; at times she felt it pull  
Imploring thinly something beautiful,

And in the night was painfully awake,  
And struggled in the darkness till day-break.  
For not at once; not without any strife,  
It died; at times it started back to life,  
Now at some angel evening after rain,  
Builded like early Paradise again,  
Now at some flower, or human face, or sky  
With silent tremble of infinity,  
Or at some waft of fields in midnight sweet,  
Or soul of summer dawn in the dark street.  
Slowly she was aware her soul had died  
Within her body: for no more it cried,  
Vexed her no more; and now monotonous life  
Easily passed; she was exempt from strife;  
And from her soul was willing to be freed,  
She could not keep what she could never feed;  
And she was well; above or bliss or care;

## 6 THE WOMAN WITH THE DEAD SOUL

Hunger and thirst were her emotions bare.  
For the great stars consented, and withdrew,  
And music, and the moon, greenness and dew.  
Yet for a time more heavily and slow  
She walked, and indolently worked, as though  
About with her she could not help but bring  
Within her busy body the dead thing.

When I had heard her tell without one tear  
What now I have translated, in great fear  
Toward her I leaned, and "O my sister!"  
cried,

"My sister!" but my hand she put aside,  
Lest I her decent dress might disarray,  
And so smiled on me that I might not stay.  
And I remembered that to one long dead  
I spoke: "No sound shall rouse her now," I  
said,

"Not Orpheus touching in that gloom his  
chord,

Nor even the special whisper that restored  
Pale Lazarus; yet will she seem to run,  
And hurry eager in the noonday sun,  
Industrious, timed, and kempt; till she at last,  
Run down, inaccurate, aside is cast."

While thus I whispered and in wonder wild  
Could not unfix my gaze from her, a child  
Plucked at her dress, and the dead woman  
rose;

On to the mirror silently she goes,  
Lightly a loose tress touches at her ear;  
She gazes in her own eyes without fear.  
Deliberately then with fingers light  
She smoothed her dress, and stole into the  
night.

## MARPESSA

Marpessa, being given by Zeus her choice between the god Apollo and Idas a mortal, chose Idas.

WOUNDED with beauty in the summer night  
Young Idas tossed upon his couch, and cried  
“Marpessa, O Marpessa!” From the dark  
The floating smell of flowers invisible,  
The mystic yearning of the garden wet,  
The moonless-passing night—into his brain  
Wandered, until he rose and outward leaned  
In the dim summer: 'twas the moment deep  
When we are conscious of the secret dawn,  
Amid the darkness that we feel is green.  
To Idas had Marpessa been revealed,

Roaming with morning thoughts amid the  
dew,

All fresh from sleeping; and upon her cheek  
The bloom of pure repose; like perfect fruit  
Even at the moment was her beauty ripe.

The god Apollo from the heaven of heavens  
Her mortal sweetness through the air allured;  
And on this very noon she shall decide  
'Twixt Idas and the god, take to herself  
A brief or an eternal lover. So  
When the long day that glideth without cloud,  
The summer day, was at her blue deep hour  
Of lilies musical with busy bliss,  
When very light trembled as with excess,  
And heat was frail, and every bush and flower  
Was drooping in the glory overcome;  
They three together met; on the one side,

Fresh from diffusing light on all the world  
Apollo; on the other without sleep  
Idas, and in the midst Marpessa stood.  
Just as a flower after drenching rain,  
So from the falling of felicity  
Her human beauty glowed, and it was new;  
The bee too near her bosom drowsed and  
dropped.

But as the god sprang to embrace her, they  
Heard thunder, and a little afterward  
The far Paternal voice, "Let her decide."  
And as a flame blown backward by a gust,  
Burned to and fro in fury beautiful  
The murmuring god; but at the last he spoke,  
And smiled as on his favourite western isle.  
"Marpessa, though no trouble, nor any pain,  
So is it willed, can touch me; but I live

For ever in a deep deliberate bliss,  
A spirit sliding through tranquillity;  
Yet when I saw thee I imagined woe,  
That thou who art so fair, shouldst ever taste  
Of the earth-sorrow: for thy life has been  
The history of a flower in the air,  
Liable but to breezes and to time,  
As rich and purposeless as is the rose:  
Thy simple doom is to be beautiful.  
Thee God created but to grow, not strive,  
And not to suffer, merely to be sweet,  
The favourite of his rains; and thou indeed  
Lately upon the summer wast disclosed.  
Child, wilt thou taste of grief? On thee the  
hours  
Shall feed, and bring thy soul into the dusk:  
Even now thy face is hastening to the dark!

For slowly shalt thou cool to all things great,  
And wisely smile at love; and thou shalt see  
Beautiful Faith surrendering to Time,  
The fierce ingratitude of children loved,  
Ah, sting of stings! A mourner shalt thou  
stand

At Passion's funeral in decent garb.

The greenly silent and cool-growing night  
Shall be the time when most thou art awake,  
With dreary eyes of all illusion cured,  
Beside that stranger that thy husband is.  
But if thou'l live with me, then shalt thou  
bide

In mere felicity above the world,  
In peace alive and moving, where to stir  
Is ecstacy, and thrilling is repose.

What is the love of men that women seek it?

In its beginning pale with cruelty,  
But having sipped of beauty, negligent,  
And full of languor and distaste: for they  
Seeking that perfect face beyond the world  
Approach in vision earthly semblances,  
And touch, and at the shadows flee away.  
Then wilt thou die? Part with eternal thoughts,  
Lie without any hope beneath the grass,  
All thy imaginations in the dust?  
And all that tint and melody and breath,  
Which in their lovely unison are thou,  
To be dispersed upon the whirling sands!  
Thy soul blown seaward on nocturnal blast!  
O brief and breathing creature, wilt thou cease  
Once having been? Thy doom doth make  
thee rich,  
And the low grave doth make thee exquisite.

But if thou'l live with me, then will I kiss  
Warm immortality into thy lips;  
And I will carry thee above the world,  
To share my ecstacy of flinging beams,  
And scattering without intermission joy.

And thou shalt know that first leap of the sea  
Toward me; the grateful upward look of earth,  
Emerging roseate from her bath of dew,—  
We two in heaven dancing,—Babylon  
Shall flash and murmur, and cry from under us,  
And Nineveh catch fire, and at our feet  
Be hurled with her inhabitants, and all  
Adoring Asia kindle and hugely bloom;—  
We two in heaven running,—continents  
Shall lighten, ocean unto ocean flash,  
And rapidly laugh till all this world is warm.  
Or since thou art a woman, thou shalt have

More tender tasks; to steal upon the sea,  
A long expected bliss to tossing men.  
Or build upon the evening sky some wished  
And glorious metropolis of cloud.  
Thou shalt persuade the harvest and bring on  
The deeper green; or silently attend  
The fiery funeral of foliage old,  
Connive with Time serene and the good hours.  
Or,—for I know thy heart,—a dearer toil,—  
To lure into the air a face long sick,  
To gild the brow that from its dead looks up,  
To shine on the unforgiven of this world;  
With slow sweet surgery restore the brain,  
And to dispel shadows and shadowy fear.”  
When he had spoken, humbly Idas said:  
“After such argument what can I plead?  
Or what pale promise make? Yet since it is

In women to pity rather than to aspire,  
A little I will speak. I love thee then  
Not only for thy body packed with sweet  
Of all this world, that cup of brimming June,  
That jar of violet wine set in the air,  
That palest rose sweet in the night of life;  
Nor for that stirring bosom all besieged  
By drowsing lovers, or thy perilous hair;  
Nor for that face that might indeed provoke  
Invasion of old cities; no, nor all  
Thy freshness stealing on me like strange  
sleep.

Not for this only do I love thee, but  
Because Infinity upon thee broods;  
And thou art full of whispers and of shadows.  
Thou meanest what the sea has striven to say  
So long, and yearnéd up the cliffs to tell;

Thou art what all the winds have uttered not,  
What the still night suggesteth to the heart.  
Thy voice is like to music heard ere birth,  
Some spirit lute touched on a spirit sea;  
Thy face remembered is from other worlds,  
It has been died for, though I know not when,  
It has been sung of, though I know not where.  
It has the strangeness of the luring West,  
And of sad sea-horizons; beside thee  
I am aware of other times and lands,  
Of birth far-back, of lives in many stars.  
O beauty lone and like a candle clear  
In this dark country of the world! Thou art  
My woe, my early light, my music dying."  
As he was speaking, she with lips apart  
Breathed, and with dimmer eyes leaned through  
the air

As one in dream, and now his human hand  
Took in her own; and to Apollo spoke:  
“O gradual rose of the dim universe!  
Whose warmth steals through the grave unto  
the dead,  
Soul of the early sky, the priest of bloom!  
Who beautifully goest in the West,  
Attracting as to an eternal home  
The yearning soul. Male of the female earth!  
O eager bridegroom springing in this world  
As in thy bed prepared! Fain would I know  
Yon heavenly wafting through the heaven wide,  
And the large view of the subjected seas,  
And famous cities, and the various toil  
Of men: all Asia at my feet spread out  
In indolent magnificence of bloom!  
Africa in her matted hair obscured,

And India in meditation plunged !  
Then the delight of flinging the sunbeams,  
Diffusing silent bliss ; and yet more sweet,—  
To cherish fruit on the warm wall ; to raise  
Out of the tomb to glory the pale wheat,  
Serene ascension by the rain prepared ;  
To work with the benignly falling hours,  
And beautiful slow Time. But dearest, this,  
To gild the face that from its dead looks up,  
To shine on the rejected, and arrive  
To women that remember in the night ;  
Or mend with sweetest surgery the mind.  
And yet, forgive me if I can but speak  
Most human words. Of immortality  
Thou singest : thou would'st hold me from the  
ground,  
And this just opening beauty from the grave.

As yet I have known no sorrow; all my days  
Like perfect lilies under water stir,  
And God has sheltered me from his own wind;  
The darling of his breezes have I been.

Yet as to one inland, that dreameth lone,  
Sea-faring men with their sea-weary eyes,  
Round the inn-fire tell of some foreign land;  
So agéd men, much tossed about in life,  
Have told me of that country, Sorrow far.  
How many goodly ships at anchor lie  
Within her ports; even to me indeed  
Hath a sea-rumour through the night been  
borne.

And I myself remember, and have heard,  
Of men that did believe, women that loved  
That were unhappy long and now are dead,  
With wounds that no eternity can close,

Life had so marked them: or of others who  
Panted toward their end, and fell on death  
Even as sobbing runners breast the rope.  
And most I remember of all human things  
My mother; often as a child I pressed  
My face against her cheek, and felt her tears;  
Even as she smiled on me, her eyes would fill,  
Until my own grew ignorantly wet;  
And I in silence wondered at sorrow.  
When I remember this, how shall I know  
That I myself may not, by sorrow taught,  
Accept the perfect stillness of the ground?  
Where, though I lie still, and stir not at all,  
Yet shall I irresistibly be kind,  
Helplessly sweet, a wandering garden bliss.  
My ashes shall console and make for peace;  
This mind that injured, be an aimless balm.

Or if there be some other world, with no  
Bloom, neither rippling sound, nor early smell,  
Nor leaves, nor pleasant exchange of human  
speech;

Only a dreadful pacing to and fro  
Of spirits meditating on the sun;  
A land of baréd boughs and grieving wind;  
Yet would I not forego the doom, the place,  
Whither my poets and my heroes went  
Before me; warriors that with deeds forlorn  
Saddened my youth, yet made it great to live;  
Lonely antagonists of Destiny,  
That went down scornful before many spears,  
Who soon as we are born, are straight our  
friends;

And live in simple music, country songs,  
And mournful ballads by the winter fire.

Since they have died ; their death is ever mine ;  
I would not lose it. Then, thou speak'st of  
joy,

Of immortality without one sigh,  
Existence without tears for evermore.

Thou would'st preserve me from the anguish,  
lest

This holy face into the dark return.

Yet I being human, human sorrow miss.

The half of music, I have heard men say,  
Is to have grieved ; when comes the lonely  
wail

Over the mind ; old men have told it me  
Subdued after long life by simple sounds.

The mourner is the favourite of the moon,  
And the departing sun his glory owes  
To the eternal thoughts of creatures brief,

Who think the thing that they shall never  
see.

Since we must die, how bright the starry  
track!

How wonderful in a bereavéd ear  
The Northern wind; how strange the summer  
night,

The exhaling earth to those who vainly love.  
Out of our sadness have we made this world  
So beautiful; the sea sighs in our brain,  
And in our heart that yearning of the moon.  
To all this sorrow was I born, and since  
Out of a human womb I came, I am  
Not eager to forego it; I would scorn  
To elude the heaviness and take the joy,  
For pain came with the sap, pangs with the  
bloom:

This is the sting, the wonder. Yet should I  
Linger beside thee in felicity,  
Sliding with open eyes through liquid bliss  
For ever; still I must grow old. Ah I  
Should ail beside thee Apollo, and should note  
With eyes that would not be, but yet are dim,  
Ever so slight a change from day to day  
In thee my husband; watch thee nudge thyself  
To little offices that once were sweet:  
Slow where thou once wert swift, remembering  
To kiss those lips which once thou couldst  
not leave.

I should expect thee by the Western bay,  
Faded, not sure of thee, with desperate smiles,  
And pitiful devices of my dress  
Or fashion of my hair: thou wouldest grow  
kind;

Most bitter to a woman that was loved.  
I must ensnare thee to my arms, and touch  
Thy pity, to but hold thee to my heart.  
But if I live with Idas, then we two  
On the low earth shall prosper hand in hand  
In odours of the open field, and live  
In peaceful noises of the farm, and watch  
The pastoral fields burned by the setting sun.  
And he shall give me passionate children, not  
Some radiant god that will despise me quite,  
But clambering limbs and little hearts that err.  
And I shall sleep beside him in the night,  
And fearful from some dream shall touch his  
hand  
Secure; or at some festival we two  
Will wander through the lighted city streets;  
And in the crowd I'll take his arm and feel

Him closer for the press. So shall we live.  
And though the first sweet sting of love be  
past,  
The sweet that almost venom is ; though youth,  
With tender and extravagant delight,  
The first and secret kiss by twilight hedge,  
The insane farewell repeated o'er and o'er,  
Pass off ; there shall succeed a faithful peace ;  
Beautiful friendship tried by sun and wind,  
Durable from the daily dust of life.  
And though with sadder, still with kinder eyes,  
We shall behold all frailties, we shall haste  
To pardon, and with mellowing minds to bless.  
Then though we must grow old, we shall grow  
old  
Together, and he shall not greatly miss  
My bloom faded, and wan light of eyes,

Too deeply gazed in ever to seem diin;  
Nor shall we murmur at, nor much regret  
The years that gently bend us to the ground,  
And gradually incline our face; that we  
Leisurely stooping, and with each slow step,  
May curiously inspect our lasting home.  
  
But we shall sit with luminous holy smiles,  
Endeared by many griefs, by many a jest,  
And custom sweet of living side by side;  
And full of memories not unkindly glance  
Upon each other. Last, we shall descend  
Into the natural ground—not without tears—  
One must go first, ah god! one must go first;  
After so long one blow for both were good;  
Still like old friends, glad to have met, and  
leave  
  
Behind a wholesome memory on the earth.

And thou, beautiful god, in that far time,  
When in thy setting sweet thou gazest down  
On this grey head, wilt thou remember then  
That once I pleased thee, that I once was  
young?"

When she had spoken, Idas with one cry  
Held her, and there was silence; while the  
god

In anger disappeared. Then slow'y they,  
He looking downward, and she gazing up,  
Into the evening green wandered away.

## THE WIFE.

A TRUE STORY DONE INTO VERSE

HER husband starved; and gazed up in her  
face:

There was no crumb of bread in the bare  
place.

Grieving she stared into the waning light  
With fixéd eyes that had in them no sight.  
But now at last so deeply, "Ah!" he said,  
She might no longer bide about the bed;  
But as in panic ran from side to side,  
And like a creature all around her spied.  
Sudden she stood; and paléd in her thought,

And with both hands at her wild bosom  
caught;  
She saw the room of every morsel reft,  
And only her own body now is left.  
Then like a martyr robing for the flame,  
She wound the shawl about her without shame;  
Lo in the red shawl sacredly she burned,  
Her face already into ashes turned!  
And blind out of the brightness of his face  
On to the street she came with wandering  
pace.  
But at the door a moment did she quail,  
Hearing her little son behind her wail;  
Who, waking, stretched his arms out to her  
wide,  
And softly, "Mother, take me with you!" cried;  
For he would run beside her, clasping tight

Her hand, and lag at every window bright,  
Or near some stall beneath the wild gas-flare,  
At the dim fruit in ghostly bloom would stare.  
Toward him she turned, and felt her bosom  
swell

Wildly: he was so young almost she fell;  
Yet took him up, and to allay his cries  
Smiled at him with her lips, not with her eyes,  
Then laid him down; away her hand she  
snatched,

And now with streaming face the door un-  
latched,

When lo, the long uproar of feet,

The huge dim fury of the street!

While she into the wild night goes,

That in her eyes a light shower blows.

Faces like moths against her fly,

Like moths by brilliance lured to die ;  
The clerk with spirit lately dead,  
The decent clothes above him spread ;  
The joyous cruel face of boys ;  
Those dreadful shadows proffering toys ;  
The constable with lifted hand  
Conducting the orchestral Strand ;  
A woman secretly distrest,  
And staidly weeping, dimly drest ;  
A girl is vending flowers and fern,  
Their very touch her fingers burn ;  
A blind man passes, that doth sound  
With shaking head the hollow ground.  
In showering air, the mystic damp,  
The dim balm blown from lamp to lamp,  
A strange look from a shredded shawl,  
A casual voice with thrilling fall !

The officer from passing eye  
Hustles the forms that injured lie,  
Creatures we marred, compelled upright  
To drift beside us in the light.  
  
But now she slowly trembles as she sees  
The cruel lover that must give her ease:  
Sated, arranged, he paced in moody stride,  
With little lilies on his breast that died.  
  
O meekly she beside him went away,  
And dutifully as a daughter may.

From that unrealized embrace  
Swiftly she broke with eager face;  
With food for him that called aloud,  
She battled through the hostile crowd;  
An army to frustrate her bent,  
In sullen numbers 'gainst her sent.

The mystic river floating wan,  
The cold soul of the city shone;  
The moonéd terminus through the dark  
With emerald and ruby spark,  
The stoker burningly embowered,  
With fiery roses on him showered,  
Glide; at her feet the mud-gleam blue,  
Above a cloudy tinge and rue;  
And through the dark the early smell  
Of waking meadows on her fell.  
  
With her right arm the door she pushed,  
And to the dead the *widow* rushed.  
  
But at the sight so deeply was she torn,  
She babbled to him like one lately born;  
And sorrowful dim sounds about him made,  
That were not speech: and wildly to him  
prayed.

She felt how cold is God, how brief our breath,  
How vain is any love, how strong is death:  
"O fool, O fool! To have so quickly died;  
I am unclean for evermore," she cried;  
And then with fear, with gathering distrust,  
Swiftly between his teeth the morsels thrust.  
Then stiller grew; and with a moaning slow  
Relented now, and wearied in her woe.  
But as the woman, dying in her thought,  
Looked upward; at her dress her baby caught,  
And she revived, and toward her little son  
Ventured, that he into her arms might run.  
And like a strange woman all doubtfully  
She stretched her arms out shining wistfully,  
As though with meek advances she beguiled  
Into her sighing bosom her own child.

Then pulled him close to her, and held him  
there,

And all those tears fell down into his hair.

Softly she said, "O cruel new-born thing!

The years to you a gentleness will bring;

Then think of me as one that not in thought,  
But out of yearning into woe was brought."

So as she mourned above him, the old farm

With evening noises in the twilight charm

Returned, and she remembered quiet trees

Just stirring; she can hear the very breeze!

Her prudent mother wisely to her speaks,

Her peaceful hair a little sorrow streaks.

And as a soft and dreadful summer day

Will suddenly through chill December stray,

So the mild beauty of old happiness

Wandered into her mind with strange distress.

Till slowly with the gathering light, lo Life  
Came back on her: Desire and Dust and  
Strife;

The huge and various world with murmur  
grand.

Time had begun to touch her with soft hand,  
And sacred passing hours with all things new,  
Divine forgetfulness and falling dew.

Then hunger pained: no thought she had, no  
care,

She and the child together ate that fare.

## FACES AT A FIRE

DAZZLED with watching how the swift fire fled  
Along the dribbling roof, I turned my head;  
When lo, upraised beneath the lighted cloud  
The illumed unconscious faces of the crowd!  
An old grey face in lovely bloom upturned,  
The ancient rapture and the dream returned!  
A crafty face wondering simply up!  
That dying face near the communion cup!  
The experienced face, now venturous and rash,  
The scheming eyes hither and thither flash!  
That common trivial face made up of needs,  
Now pale and recent from triumphal deeds!  
The hungry tramp with indolent gloating stare,

The beggar in glory and released from care.  
A mother slowly burning with bare breast,  
Yet her consuming child close to her prest!  
That prosperous citizen in anguish dire,  
Beseeching heaven from purgatorial fire!  
Wonderful souls by sudden flame betrayed,  
I saw; then through the darkness went afraid.

## THE LILY

I DREAMED that after wandering long I came  
To a dark garden with frail souls for flowers;  
And saw the gentle lady we call Death  
Pace to and fro; above each bloom she bent,  
Then passed: a slumbrous sky above her rolled  
Cloud upon cloud: and from those human  
flowers

A tragic odour like emotion rose.

I followed in her steps, and now she touched  
Some poppy that had been a dreamer frail,  
Or rose that was a passionate Eastern queen.  
But on a sudden I implored her hand,  
And should have fallen: from a lily near  
What sweet and paining odour to my brain

Darted, with delicate, unhappy smell  
Of trouble old and gladness far away!  
I knew more surely than from any face,  
More certainly remembered than at words,  
And slowly swooning said, "'Tis she! 'tis she!"  
Then looking to that lady cold, whose face  
No sternness and no pity had, I said,  
"Lady, this flower but a little while,  
O! but a little while, has risen here:  
Have a deep care of it! a small neglect,  
A brief oblivion overburdens it.  
For she, that is this flower, and merely blows  
So strangely silent and so white, was used  
To be much loved, and guarded wistfully.  
O! from this flower be never far away!"  
But she to whom I spoke moved slowly on,  
And as I walked beside her, I awoke.

## TO MILTON,—BLIND

HE who said suddenly, “Let there be light!”  
To thee the dark deliberately gave;  
That those full eyes might undistracted be  
By this beguiling show of sky and field,  
This brilliance, that so lures us from the Truth.  
He gave thee back original night, His own  
Tremendous canvas, large and blank and free,  
Where at each thought a star flashed out and  
sang.

O blinded with a special lightning, thou  
Hadst once again the virgin Dark! and when  
The pleasant flowery sight, which had deterred  
Thine eyes from seeing, when this recent world

Was quite withdrawn ; then burst upon thy view  
The elder glory ; space again in pangs,  
And Eden odorous in the early mist,  
That heaving watery plain that *was* the world ;  
Then the burned earth, and Christ coming in  
clouds.

Or rather a special leave to thee was given  
By the high power, and thou with bandaged  
eyes

Wast guided through the glimmering camp of  
God.

Thy hand was taken by angels who patrol  
The evening, or are sentries to the dawn,  
Or pace the wide air everlastinglly.

Thou wast admitted to the presence, and deep  
Argument heardest, and the large design  
That brings this world out of the woe to bliss.

## LAZARUS

"THE light which I have followed all this  
way

Out of the darkness grows into a face;  
Thy face, dear friend, whom I so long have  
known.

Have we not wandered with twined arms, and  
walked

Through evening fields together? And those  
lips,

That I have kissed so oft, did they pronounce  
That dreadful whisper, 'Lazarus arise'?  
For as it came in darkness I was 'ware  
Of countenances terrible, that gazed

Each on the other in drear impotence,

As I with sighs arose eluding them.

O face that seemest made to weep and smile

With us, and hands all rough with common

tasks !

Is this indeed *Thy* sun to which thou hast

Recalled me, and are these *Thy* fields, which

grow

Slowly from grey to green before my eyes ?

I felt Thee irresistible in the grave.

Forgive me that I talked so lightly, and went

So unconcerned beside thee in old days.

How is it thou canst care to come and go

With such as me, and walk and work with us,

Thou at whose whisper Death idled and

grieved,

And knew the voice at which creation shone

Suddenly? Yet was I so near to peace;  
And I came back to life remorsefully,  
When the sea murmured again, and fields  
appeared.  
  
But how should I complain? Unto what end  
I am recalled I know not; but if thou  
Art here content to be, then why not I?"

## FAITH

THOU Power, that beyond the wind  
Rulest, to thee I am resigned.  
My child from me is snatched away;  
She vanished at the peer of day.  
Yet I discern with clearer brow  
A high indulgence in the blow,  
Light in the storm that o'er me broke,  
A special kindness in the stroke,  
A gentleness behind the Law,  
A sweetness following on the awe.  
Shall I forget that noonday hour,  
When as upon some favourite flower  
A deep and tingling bliss was shed,

A thrilling peace from overhead?

I had not known it since my birth,

I shall not know it more on earth.

But now I may not sin, nor err,

For fear of ever losing her.

Though reeling from Thy thunder-blow,

Though blinded with Thy lightning low,

I stagger back to dismal life,

And mix myself with mortal strife,

Thy judgment still to me is sweet;

I feel, I feel, that we shall meet.

## BY THE SEA

REMEMBER, ah remember, how we walked  
Together on the sea-cliff! You were come  
From bathing in the ocean, and the sea  
Was not yet dry upon your hair: together  
We walked in the wet wind till we were far  
From voices, even from the thoughts of men.  
  
Remember how on the warm beach we sat  
By the old barque, and in the smell of tar;  
While the full ocean on the pebbles dropped,  
And in our ears the intimate low wind  
Of noon, that breathing from some ancient  
place,  
Blew on us merest sleep and pungent youth.

So deeply glad we grew that in pure joy  
Closer we came; your wild and wet dark hair  
Slashed in my eyes your essence and your  
sting.

We had no thought; we troubled not to speak;  
Slowly your head fell down upon my breast,  
In the soft breeze the acquiescing sun;  
And the sea-bloom, the colour of calm wind,  
Was on your cheek; like children then we  
kissed,

Innocent with the sea and pure with air;  
My spirit fled into thee. The moon climbed,  
The sea foamed nearer, and we two arose;  
But ah, how tranquil from that deep embrace!  
And with no sadness from that natural kiss:  
Beautiful indolence was on our brains,  
And on our limbs, as we together swayed

Between the luminous ocean and dark fields.  
We two in vivid slumber without haste,  
Returned; while veil on veil the heaven was  
bared;  
And a new glory was on land and sea,  
And the moist evening fallow, richly dark,  
Sent up to us the odour cold of sleep,  
The infinite sweet of death: so we returned,  
Delaying ever, calm companions,  
Peacefully slow beside the moody heave  
Of the moon-brilliant billow to the town.

A. S. P.

FRAIL was she born ; petal by petal fell  
Her life : till it was strown upon the herb ;  
Like petals all her fancies lay about.  
And the dread Powers kept her face toward  
grief,  
Although she swerved ; and still with many a  
lash  
Guided her to the anguish carefully.  
So bare her soul that Beauty like a lance  
Pierced her, and odour full of arrows was.  
She drugged her brain against realities,  
And lived in dreams, and was with music fed,  
Imploring to be spared e'en sweetest things.

She suffered, and resorted to the ground,  
Glad to be blind, and eager to be deaf;  
Soliciting eternal apathy.

And she was swift to steep her brain in moss,  
And with the heart that so had loved, to blow  
Merely, and to be idle in the wind.

She craved no Paradise but only peace.

## THE QUESTION

FATHER, beneath the moonless night,  
This heavy stillness without light,  
There comes a thought which I must speak:  
Why is my body then so weak?  
Why do I falter in the race,  
And flag behind this mighty pace?  
Why is my strength so quickly flown?  
And hark! my mother sobs alone.

My son, when I was young and free,  
When I was filled with sap and glee,  
I squandered here and there my strength,  
And to thy mother's arms at length

Weary I came, and over tired;  
With fever all my bones were fired:  
Therefore so soon thy strength is flown,  
Therefore thy mother sobs alone.

Father, since in your weaker thought,  
And in your languor I was wrought,  
Put me away as creatures are;  
I am infirm and filled with care.  
Feebly you brought me to the light,  
Ah, gently hide me out of sight!  
Then sooner will my strength be flown,  
Nor will my mother sob alone.

My son, stir up the fire, and pass  
Quickly the comfortable glass!  
The infirm and evil fly in vain  
Is toiling up the window pane.

Fill up, for life is so, nor sigh;

We cannot run from Destiny.

Then cheer thy strength that's quickly flown.

Ah, how thy mother sobs alone!

## BEAUTIFUL DEATH

WHY dreadest thou the calm process of death?  
To miss thy wife's illuminating smile?  
No more to proudly touch thy child's bright  
hair?  
To leave this glorying green, this flashing  
sun?  
Yet Death is full of leisure, and of light;  
Of compensations and of huge amends.  
Since all the dead do for the living toil,  
Assisting, bathing, in the air, the earth;  
A shower their sympathy draws from the  
ground,  
Delicious kindness from the soil exhaled.

Then thou, spendthrift of time, shalt busy be;  
Thou shalt begin to foster and prepare.  
O thou that within glaze and blinds didst live,  
In blackness within windows bright absorbed,  
Face to the surface swimming with drowned  
eyes!

Thou as a breeze shalt wander thro' the ward,  
Balm to the sick, a cool and vagrant bliss:  
To thee the tired faces shall incline,  
Incline with closing eyes and open mouths.  
Thou, dangerous to men, in prisons shut,  
With life made irretrievable and dark.  
Thou on the thirsty place shalt drop like dew,  
Or like a cloud haste to the yearning land.  
Thou maiden with the silent speckless ways,  
On plant or creature squandering thy heart;  
Thou in caresses large shalt spend thy life.

Conspiring with the summer plans of lovers,

scent

From evening hedge the walk of boy and girl.

Thou merchant, or thou, clerk, hard driven,

urged

For ever on bright iron, timed by bells,

Shalt mellow fruit in the serene noon air,

With rivulets of birds through fields of light,

Causing to fall the indolent misty peach.

Then thou, disturbed so oft, shalt make for

peace;

Thou who didst injure, heal, and sew, and

bless;

Thou who didst mar, shalt make for perfect

health;

Thou, so unlucky, fall with fortunate rain.

And I to whom sweet life is dangerous edged,

With tenderness to madness near, with need  
Even of a little dew, a drop of hope;  
Disguised and starved, who dare not show my  
soul,

Who walk with bitten lip and clenched hands,  
For me divine relief! To dare to trust  
Each impulse, and to drive free and secure;  
All my intention bland and prosperous!  
The rose is at my silent coming rich;  
I on my enemy's eyes like sleep shall drop,  
And he at dawn shall bless me and shall  
drowse.

Blind shall I be and good, dumb and serene:  
I shall not blame, nor question; I shall shine  
Diffused and tolerant, luminous and large.  
No longer shall I vex, but live my life  
In solaces, caresses, and in balms,

Nocturnal soothings and nutritious sighs.  
The unhappy mind an odour shall be breathed ;  
I shall be sagely blown, flung with design,  
Assist this bland and universal scheme,  
Industrious, happy, sweet, delicious, dead !

## THE PRISONER

BACKWARD the prison door is flung,  
Without the young wife stands;  
While to herself she murmurs with bright eyes,  
And over-eager hands.

They brought the young man out to her,  
That was so strong erewhile ;  
Slowly he ventured up to her strange arms  
With unrecalling smile.

O like a mother she must lead  
His slow and wandering pace ;  
He stammers to her like a little child,  
And wonders in her face.

O like a daughter must she live,  
And no wife to him now;  
Only remain beside those ailing limbs,  
And soothe that agéd brow.

“ Husband,” she said, “ I had rather closed  
Those wild eyes on the bier,  
Rather have kissed those lips when they were  
cold,  
Than seen them smile so drear!”

## THE WOUND

I DREAMED that, having died, my soul was  
brought

Into the Presence. Many angels stood  
Around, and with delight upon me gazed;  
And higher I discerned the face of God  
Diffusing silent universal bliss.

Then moved an angel toward me, and with  
joy

Addressed me, saying: "Come and rest at  
last,

And having rested, then thou shalt rejoice."  
The heavenly company smiled on me sweet;  
But I unbared my soul, and showed to them

That wound which never human word, or hope,  
Or pity hath ever 'suaged; and at the sight  
A strange disturbance on the spirits came,  
And even a dimness on the face of God.  
Then rose from God's right hand a gentle  
Form,  
With silent eyes that said, "Hast thou for-  
got?"  
And He disclosed His branded brow and  
hands.  
But I toward Him turning softly said,  
"Thy wounds are many, but Thou hadst no  
child."

## THE NEW "DE PROFUNDIS"

OUT from the mist, the mist, I cry;  
Let not my soul of numbness die!  
  
My life is furled in every limb,  
And my existence groweth dim.  
  
My senses all like weapons rust,  
And lie disused in endless dust.  
  
I may not love, I may not hate;  
Slowly I feel my life abate.

O would there were a heaven to hear!  
O would there were a hell to fear!  
  
Ah, welcome fire, eternal fire,  
To burn for ever and not tire!

Better Ixion's whirling wheel,  
And still at any cost to feel!  
  
Dear Son of God, in mercy give  
My soul to flame, but let me live!

I am discouraged by the street,  
The pacing of monotonous feet;  
Faces of all emotion purged;  
From nothing unto nothing urged;  
The living men that shadows go,  
A vain procession to and fro.  
  
The earth an unreal course doth run,  
Haunted by a phantasmal sun:  
  
Thou didst create me keen and bright,  
Of hearing exquisite and sight.  
Look on thy creature, muffled, furled,  
That has no glory in thy world,

In odours that like arrows dart,  
Beauty that overwhelms the heart.  
I neither hear, nor smell, nor see;  
But only glide perpetually.

I seem to feel upon my soul  
The slow approach, the gradual roll  
Of Darkness older than the light,  
Of blackness gaining on the bright.  
O wasted is that wine like blood,  
Wasted the flesh that was our food !  
If in the dimness without strife  
I perish, life, O give me life !

## THE APPARITION

### I

My dead Love came to me, and said:  
“God gives me one hour’s rest,  
To spend upon the earth with thee:  
How shall we spend it best?”

“Why as of old,” I said, and so  
We quarrelled as of old.  
But when I turned to make my peace,  
That one short hour was told.

## II

NINE nights she did not come to me:  
The heaven was filled with rain;  
And as it fell, and fell, I said,  
“She will not come again.”

Last night she came, not as before,  
But in a strange attire;  
Weary she seemed, and very faint,  
As though she came from fire.

## III

SHE is not happy! It was noon;

The sun fell on my head:

And it was not an hour in which

We think upon the dead.

She is not happy! I should know

Her voice, much more her cry;

And close beside me a great rose

Had just begun to die.

She is not happy! As I walked,

Of her I was aware:

She cried out, like a creature hurt,

Close by me in the air.

## IV

UNDER the trembling summer stars,  
I turned from side to side;  
When she came in and sat with me,  
As though she had not died.

And she was kind to me and sweet,  
She had her ancient way;  
Remembered how I liked her hand  
Amid my hair to stray.

She had forgotten nothing, yet  
Older she seemed, and still:  
All quietly she took my kiss,  
Even as a mother will.

She rose, and in the streak of dawn

She turned as if to go:

But then again came back to me;

My eyes implored her so!

She pushed the hair from off my brow,

And looked into my eyes.

"I live in calm," she said, "and there

Am learning to be wise."

"Why grievest thou? I pity thee

Still turning on this bed."

"And art thou happy?" I exclaimed.

"Alas!" she sighed, and fled.

## V

I WOKE: she had been standing by,

With wonder on her face.

She came toward me, very bright,

As from a blessed place.

She touched me not, but smiling spoke,

And softly as before.

“ They gave me drink from some slow

stream;

I love thee now no more.”

## VI

THE other night she hurried in,  
Her face was wild with fear:  
“Old friend,” she said, “I am pursued,  
May I take refuge here?”

## LYRICS

### I

O to recall !

What to recall ?

All the roses under snow ?

Not these.

Stars that toward the water go ?

Not these.

O to recall !

What to recall ?

All the greenness after rain ?

Not this.

Joy that gleameth after pain ?

Not this.

O to recall !

What to recall ?

Not the greenness nor delight,

Not these ;

Not the roses out of sight,

Not these.

O to recall !

What to recall ?

Not the star in waters red,

Not this :

Laughter of a girl that's dead,

O this !

## II

I IN the greyness rose;  
I could not sleep for thinking of one dead.  
Then to the chest I went,  
Where lie the things of my beloved spread.

Quietly these I took;  
A little glove, a sheet of music torn,  
Paintings, ill-done perhaps;  
Then lifted up a dress that she had worn.

And now I came to where  
Her letters are; they lie beneath the rest;  
And read them in the haze;  
She spoke of many things, was sore opprest.

But these things moved me not;  
Not when she spoke of being parted quite,  
Or being misunderstood,  
Or growing weary of the world's great fight.

Not even when she wrote  
Of our dead child, and the hand-writing  
swerved;  
Not even then I shook:  
Not even by such words was I unnerved.

I thought, she is at peace;  
Whither the child is gone, she too has passed.  
And a much needed rest  
Is fallen upon her, she is still at last.

But when at length I took  
From under all those letters one small sheet,  
Folded and writ in haste;  
Why did my heart with sudden sharpness  
beat?

Alas, it was not sad!  
Her saddest words I had read calmly o'er.  
Alas, it had no pain!  
Her painful words, all these I knew before.

A hurried happy line!  
A little jest, too slight for one so dead:  
This did I not endure:  
Then with a shuddering heart no more I read.

**III**

O THOU art put to many uses, sweet!  
Thy blood will urge the rose, and surge in  
Spring;  
But yet! . . .

And all the blue of thee will go to the sky,  
And all thy laughter to the rivers run;  
But yet! . . .

Thy tumbling hair will in the West be seen,  
And all thy trembling bosom in the dawn;  
But yet! . . .

Thy briefness in the dewdrop shall be hung,  
And all the frailness of thee on the foam;  
But yet! . . .

Thy soul shall be upon the moonlight spent,  
Thy mystery spread upon the evening mere.  
And yet! . . .

## CHRIST IN HADES

A PHANTASY

KEEN as a blinded man, at dawn awake,  
Smells in the dark the cold odour of earth;  
Eastward he turns his eyes, and over him  
A dreadful freshness exquisitely breathes;  
The room is brightening, even his own face!  
So the excluded ghosts in Hades felt  
A waft of early sweet, and heard the rain  
Of Spring beginning over them; they all  
Stood still, and in each other's faces looked.  
And restless grew their queen Persephone;  
Who, like a child, dreading to be observed  
By awful Dis, threw little glances down

Toward them, and understood them with her  
eyes.

Perpetual dolour had as yet but drooped  
The corners of her mouth; and in her hand  
She held a bloom that had on earth a name.  
Quickly she whispered: "Come, my Hermes,  
Come!

'Tis time to fetch me! Ah, through all my  
veins

The sharpness of the spring returns: I hear  
The stalk revive with sap, and the first drops  
On green illumined grass; now over me  
The blades are growing fast; I cannot rest.  
He comes, he comes! Yet with how slow a  
step,

Who used to run along a sunny gust!  
And O a withered wreath! no roses now

Dewy from paradise. Surely not his  
Those earnest eyes, that ragged hair; his  
face

Was glad and cold. This is no god at all,  
Only some grieving human shade, with hands  
Unsightly, and the eager Furies wheel  
Over him!" Slowly to her side her arms  
Had fallen; Christ with grave eyes looks on  
her.

Her young mouth trembled fast, and from her  
hand

With serious face she let the earthly flower  
Drop down; then, stretching out her arms, she  
said:

"O all fresh out of beautiful sunlight!  
Thine eyes are still too dazed to see us clear.  
Was it not difficult to come away

Straight from the greenness to the dimness?

Now

It is the time of tender, opening things.

Above my head the fields murmur and wave,

And breezes are just moving the clear heat.

O the mid-noon is trembling on the corn,

On cattle calm, and trees in perfect sleep.

And hast thou empty come? Hast thou not  
brought

Even a blossom with the noise of rain

And smell of earth about it, that we all

Might gather round and whisper over it?

At one wet blossom all the dead would feel!

O thou beginning to glide here a shadow,

Soon shalt thou know how much it seems to us,

In miserable dim magnificence,

To feel the snowdrop growing over us!

That barren crown! but now it was a wreath.  
These gusts of Hell have blown it into thorn!  
If thou canst bear it yet, O speak to me  
Of the blue noon, of breezes and of rivers!"

A wonderful stillness stopped her; like to  
trees

Motionless in an ecstasy of rain,  
So the tall dead stood drooping around Christ,  
Under the falling peace intensely still;  
And some in slow delight their faces raised  
Upwards; but soon, like leaves, duly released,  
Tormented phantoms, ancient injured shades,  
Sighing began downward to drift and glide  
Toward him, and unintelligibly healed  
Lingered, with closing eyes and parting lips.  
Agamemnon bowed over, and from his wheel

Ixion staggered to his feet all blind.  
Over the head of Jesus the whole sky  
Of pain began to drive: old punishments  
Diswreathing drooped, and legendary dooms  
Dispersing hung, and lurid history streamed.  
But he against that flying sky remained  
Placid with power; in silence stood the dead,  
Gazing; only was heard that river steal,  
The listless ripple of Oblivion.  
Then an Athenian ghost stood out and spoke.  
“I fear to speak to thee, while these my eyes  
Behold our great life interrupted pause.  
That was our sky, that passes: and I miss  
The busy sound of water, and of stone;  
And sorrows that we thought perpetual  
I see suspended, and amid them thee  
Gentle, and all injured. Art thou a god

Easily closing all these open eyes,  
And hast not spoken word? Thou hast not  
played  
Monotonously as rain, inducing sleep:  
Thou comest without lute, yet hast thou power  
To charm the fixed melancholy of spirits?  
Art thou a god? Then guide us to the air,  
To trees and rivers, that peculiar light  
Which even now is squandered on the beasts.  
Canst thou not make the primrose venture up  
Or bring the gentlest shower? O pity us;  
For I would ask of thee only to look  
Upon the wonderful sunlight, and to smell  
Earth in the rain. Is not the labourer,  
Returning heavy through the August sheaves  
Against the setting sun, who gladly smells  
His supper from the opening door, is he

Not happier than these melancholy kings?  
How good it is to live, even at the worst!  
God was so lavish to us once, but here  
He hath repented, jealous of his beams.  
Just as a widower, that dreaming holds  
His dead wife in his arms, not wondering,  
So natural it appears; then starting up  
With trivial words, or even with a jest,  
Realises all the uncoloured dawn,  
And near his head the young bird in the leaves  
Stirring; not less, not otherwise do we  
Want in this colourless country the warm  
earth.

Yet how shall we in thy tormented face  
Believe? Thou comest from the glistening  
sun

As out of some great battle, nor hast thou

The beautiful ease of the untroubled gods.

Most strong are they, for they are joyous  
cold.

Thou art not happy! We can trust thee not.  
How wilt thou lead with feet already pierced?  
And if we ask thy hand, see, it is torn!"

But when he had spoken, Christ no answer  
made.

Upon his hands in uncouth gratitude  
Great prisoners muttering fawned: behind  
them stood

Dreadful suspended business, and vast life  
Pausing, dismantled piers, and naked frames.  
And further, shapes from obscure troubles  
loosed,

Like mist descended: on the horizon last,

The piled tremendous firmament collapsed,  
With dazzling pains, and solemn sorrows  
white.

Then stole a woman up to him, and said:  
“Although I know thee not, yet can I tell  
That only a great love hath brought thee  
hither.

Didst thou so ail in brightness, and couldst  
not rest

For thinking of some woman? Was thy bed  
So empty, cold thy hearth, and aimless glides  
Thy wife amidst us? Whom then dost thou  
seek?

For see, we are so changed: thou wouldest  
not know

The busy form that moved about thy fire.

She has no occupation, and no care,  
No little tasks. O we had pleasant homes.  
And often we remember husbands dear,  
That were most kind, and wonder after them.  
My little children! Who sings to them now?  
Return then to the earth! Thou canst not  
fetch  
Thy drooping listless woman to the air.  
Thou'l have no comfort out of her at all.  
Yet say, perhaps thou hast but lately died,  
And wanderest here unburied? Restless  
seem  
Those eyes; ah, on thy body thou dost feel  
The bird settling? Hath no friend covered up  
Thy limbs, or do they fall with falling waves?"  
But one broke in on her with eager words.  
" See how we live along exhausted streams,

Eluding forests, and dispersing hills;  
O but I gloried and drank and wept and  
laughed!

Give me again great life! To dare, to enjoy,  
To explore, never to tire, to be alive,  
And full of blood, and young, to risk, to love!  
The bright glory of after-battle wine,  
The flushed recounting faces, the stern hum  
Of burnished armies, thrill of unknown seas!"

As he was speaking, slowly all the dead  
The melancholy attraction of Jesus felt;  
And millions, like a sea, wave upon wave,  
Heaved dreaming to that moonlight face, or  
ran

In wonderful long ripples, sorrow-charmed.  
Toward him in faded purple, pacing came  
Dead emperors, and sad unflattered kings;

Unlucky captains listless armies led;  
Poets with music frozen on their lips,  
Toward the pale Brilliance sighed; until at last  
Antiquity, like evening gathering,  
With mild and starry faces, gradually  
Had stolen up. Glimmering all the dead  
Looked upon Jesus; as they stood, some  
thought

Spread from the furthest edges like a breeze,  
Till like a leafy forest, the huge host  
Whispered together, bending all one way  
Toward him; and then ensued a stillness  
deep.

But suddenly the form of Jesus stirred;  
And all the dead stirred with him suddenly.  
He shuddered with a rapture; and from his  
eyes

They felt returning agonies of hope.  
As men, flame-wrapped, hither and thither  
run,  
To rid them, or fall headlong to the ground;  
The dead, caught in intolerable hope,  
Hither and thither burning rushed, or fell  
Imploring him to leave them cold; but Christ  
Came through them: leading irresistibly  
Not western spirits alone: but all that world  
Was up! and after him in passion swept  
Dead Asia, murmuring, and the buried North!

But in his path a lonely spirit stood;  
A Roman, he who from a greater Greek  
Borrowed as beautifully as the moon  
The fire of the sun: fresh come he was, and  
still

Deaf with the sound of Rome: forward he  
came

Softly; a human tear had not yet dried.

"Whither," he said, "O whither dost thou  
lead

In such a calm all these embattled dead?

Almost I could begin to sing again,  
To see these nations burning run through  
Hell,

Magnificently anguished, by the grave  
Untired; and this last March against the  
Powers.

Who would more gladly follow thee than I?

But over me the human trouble comes.

Dear gladiator pitted against Fate,  
I fear for thee: around thee is the scent  
Of over-beautiful, quick-fading things,

The pang, the gap, the briefness, all the dew,  
Tremble, and suddenness of earth: I must  
Remember young men dead in their hot  
bloom,

The sweetness of the world edged like a sword,  
The melancholy knocking of those waves,  
The deep unhappiness of winds, the light  
That comes on things we never more shall  
see.

Yet I am thrilled: thou seemest like the  
bourne

Of all our music, of the hinting night,  
Of souls under the moonlight opening."

Now after speaking, he bowed down his head,  
Faltered, and shed wet tears in the vain place.  
And Christ half turned, and with grave, open  
eyes,

Looked on him: but behind there was a  
sound

Of vast impatience, and the murmurous chafe  
Of captains sick for war; and poets shone  
All dreaming bright, and fiery prophets, seized  
With gladness, boded splendid things; and  
scarred

Heroes, as desperate men, that see no path,  
Yet follow a riddled memorable flag,  
Pressed close upon that leader world-engraved.  
But he began to pace with slower step,  
With wandering gaze, still hesitating more;  
Then stayed, and on his last foot strongly  
leaned.

Faintly the air bore to him blood he knew.  
His gentle eyes hither and thither roved.

The Furies rose ejaculating fast,  
And circled nearer o'er the limitless dead,  
Who paused, all whispering: before them  
hung

Still unredeemed Prometheus from his crag;  
His limbs impaled: then stood the Son of  
Man,

And seemed almost about to speak; the dead  
In silence upward gazed. The Titan's face  
Through passing storms leaps out in dazzling  
pain

Momently on them, and his tone returns  
Fitfully through the gusting hurricane.

“Stay, mighty dreamer, though thou comest on  
Attracting all the dead, to thy deep charm  
Resigned and bright; yet stay, and look on  
me!

Do I not trouble thee? Dost thou not  
swerve

Smelling my kindred blood on the great track?  
Full in thy path I menace. After me  
Canst thou go on?" The storm carried his  
voice

From them, and veiled with rushing hail his  
face.

Then many unbound heroes toward him ran,  
Going with great dumb gestures between him  
And Christ; and in their leader's face looked up  
Beseeching him their brother to release;  
Then they refrained, all motionless: and now  
The Titan bowed, coming upon them, and  
seemed

Falling to carry with him all the crag  
Down on them: over the dead host he cried:

"Lo all these ancient prisoners released!  
Did I not feel them everywhere come down  
Easily from immortal torment? yet  
I, I alone, while all came down from woe,  
Still striving, could not wrench away these  
limbs.

O Christ, canst thou a nail move from these  
feet,

Thou who art standing in such love of me?  
Thy hands are too like mine to undo these  
bonds,

Brother, although the dead world follow thee,  
Deep-fascinated: love hath marred us both,  
And one yearning, as wide as is the world.

O how thy power leaves thee at this cross!  
Prepare thee for the anguish! Thou shalt  
know

Trouble so exquisite, that from his wheel  
Happy Ixion shall spare tears for thee;  
And thou shalt envy me my shadowy crag  
And softly-feeding vulture. Thou shalt stand  
Gazing for ever on the earth, and watch  
How fast thy words incarnadine the world !  
That I know all things is my torment; noth-  
ing,

That ever shall befall, to me is new:  
Already I have suffered it far-off;  
And on the mind the poor event appears  
The pale reflexion of some ancient pang.  
Yet I foresee dim comfort, and discern  
A bleak magnificence of endless hope.  
It seems that even thy woe shall have an  
end.

It comes upon thee ! O prepare thee ; ah,

That wailing, those young cries, this smouldering smell !

I see the dreadful look of men unborn.

What hast thou said, that all the air is blood ? ”

He cried with nostrils shuddering fast ; and Christ

Moved to unbind him ; but with arm outstretched

Suddenly stood. A scene unrolling stayed Him who had easily released the dead.

He knew that for a time the great advance He must delay, postponing our desire.

The earth again he sees, and all mankind Half in the shining sun upright, and half Reposing in the shadow ; deserts and towns,

And cloudy mountains and the trembling sea,  
And all the deeds done; and the spoken  
words

Distinct he hears: the human history  
Before his eyes defiles in bright sunbeams,  
An endless host parading past; whom he,  
Their leader mild, remorsefully reviewed,  
And had no joy in them, although aloud  
They cried his name, and with fierce faces glad  
Looked up to him for praise, all murmuring  
proud,  
And bloody trophies toward him flourished  
and waved:  
But as he stood, gazing, from time to time  
He seemed to swerve, as though his hand  
grew red,  
Or move, as though to interrupt some sight.

Now when the dead saw that he must not  
stir,

Absorbed, with wonder gathering in his eyes,  
They came about him, touching him, and  
some

Reminded him, and looked into his face.

Others in patience laid them down, or fell  
To calling him sweet earthly names: at last  
Waiting the signal that he could not give,  
Wanting the one word that he might not  
speak,

Seeing he stirred not once, they wandered off,  
And gathering into groups, yet spoke of him;  
Then to despair slowly dispersed, as men  
Return with morning to the accustomed task.  
And as without some theatre, so friend  
Waited for friend, and speaking of that scene,

Into the ancient sorrow walked away.

Yet many could not, after such a sight,

At once retire, but must from time to time

Linger with undetermining bright eyes.

Now at each parting way some said farewell,

And each man took his penance up, perhaps

Less easily from such an interval:

The vault closed back, woe upon woe, the

wheel

Revolved, the stone rebounded; for that time

Hades her interrupted life resumed.



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